

CHARACTERS

KINSMAN of Euripides

EURIPIDES, the tragic poet

SLAVE of Agathon

AGATHON, the tragic poet
 KRITYLLA, a Thesmophorian priestess
 MIKA assembly speaker
 WOMAN assembly speaker
 KLEISTHENES, an effeminate Athenian
 MARSHAL
 POLICEMAN
 ECHO, an elderly goddess
 CHORUS of Athenian women

Mute characters

PHILISTE and other Athenian women
 MANIA, nurse of Mika, and other servants of the women
 ELAPHION, a dancing girl
 TEREDON, a boy piper

PROLOGUE

SCENE: A street in Athens, after dawn on a late October morning. Two elderly men, one hurrying and the other lagging, enter along the parodos and make their way toward the stage.

KINSMAN [stopping and clutching his side]: Zeus! Will the swallow-time of spring ever come? This guy's going to kill me, plodding along since daybreak like a mill-ox. [Calling loudly to Euripides' hurrying back.] Might it be possible, before I puke out my guts, to find out where you're taking me, Euripides?

EURIPIDES: No; no need to hear the whole of what you presently will see. 5

KINSMAN: What? Say again? I don't need to hear . . .

EURIPIDES: No, not what you're going to see.

KINSMAN: And I don't need to see . . .

EURIPIDES: No, not what you should hear.

KINSMAN: What are you telling me? It's pretty subtle. Do you say I shouldn't 10
 either hear or see?

EURIPIDES: These two are by nature mutually distinct.

KINSMAN: How "distinct"?

EURIPIDES: The way they were sundered in time afore. Aether,²⁴ you see, when
 in primordial time he began to separate from Earth and with her begat 15

within himself living things astir, first fashioned for sight the eye, counter-image of the solar disc, and for hearing drilled that funnel, the ear.

KINSMAN: On account of this funnel, then, I'm not to hear or see? By Zeus, I'm delighted to have this additional lesson! Deep colloquies are such a dandy thing!

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EURIPIDES: You could learn many other such lessons from me.

KINSMAN: As a matter of fact I'd love another fine lesson: learning how to be lame in both legs.

EURIPIDES [*crossly*]: Come along here and pay attention.

KINSMAN: OK, OK.

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[*They mount the stage and move toward the central door of the stage-building.*]

EURIPIDES: Do you see that little door?

KINSMAN: By Herakles, I think I do!

EURIPIDES: Be quiet now.

KINSMAN: Quiet about the little door?

EURIPIDES: Listen.

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KINSMAN: I'm listening and being quiet about the door.

EURIPIDES: This happens to be the dwelling of the renowned tragic poet, Agathon.²⁵

KINSMAN: What Agathon do you mean?

EURIPIDES: There is an Agathon . . .

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KINSMAN: You mean the suntanned one, strong guy?²⁶

EURIPIDES: No, a different one. You've never seen him?

KINSMAN: The one with the full beard?²⁷

EURIPIDES: You've never seen him?

KINSMAN: By Zeus, never, as far as I can recall.

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EURIPIDES: Well, you must have fucked him, though you might not know it.²⁸

[*The door of Agathon's house begins to open.*] But let's hunker out of the way: one of his slaves is coming out the door with brazier and myrtle-sprigs, probably off to a make a sacrifice for success in poetic composition.

[They crouch down to one side of the door. Enter Agathon's slave, a beardless and effeminate young man; holding the smoking brazier and a sprig of myrtle, he begins to sing in Agathonian fashion.]²⁹

SLAVE:

Let the folk keep holy silence, 45
gating the mouth, for here sojourns
the holy company of Muses
within the suzerain's halls,
fashioning song.
Aether windless hold thy breath 50
and whelming brine thy boom,
gray—

KINSMAN [*fidgeting*]: Blah!³⁰

EURIPIDES [*listening attentively*]: Shhh! What's he say?

SLAVE:

Lie down, feathered tribes, in rest, 55
paws of wild beasts run not
through the timber—

KINSMAN: Blah blah blah!

SLAVE:

For that craftsman of poesy, Agathon 60
our helmsman, prepares—

KINSMAN: to get fucked?

SLAVE [*looking around*]: Who uttered that?

KINSMAN [*in a fruity voice*]: Windless Aether.

SLAVE [*satisfied*]:—prepares to position 65
the keel-braces of his inchoate drama.
He's warping fresh strakes for his verses;
some he planes down, others he couples,
minting aphorisms, swapping meanings,
channeling wax and rounding the mold
and funneling metal— 70

KINSMAN: and giving blow jobs.

SLAVE [*looking around*]: What savage draws nigh the portals?

KINSMAN [*mimicking the Slave*]:

One who's ready, for you
and your craftsman of poesy too, 75
to fashion and mold
and funnel this cock of mine
into your back portals.³¹

SLAVE [*spinning around and glaring at the Kinsman*]: I can't imagine what a rapist you
were when you were a boy, old man. 80

EURIPIDES [*to the Slave*]: My good fellow, forget about him! Just summon
Agathon here to me; it's urgent.

SLAVE: Supplicate not; the master shall soon emerge. In fact he's beginning to
fashion a song, and in wintertime he's hard put to bend his riffs without
coming outside into the sun.³² 85

EURIPIDES: And what am I supposed to do?

SLAVE: Wait around; he's coming out. [*Exit Slave.*]

EURIPIDES: O Zeus, what meanest thou to do to me today?

KINSMAN: I would like to know what's going on here. What's all this
groaning? What's the trouble? You shouldn't be hiding anything from me: 90
I'm your kinsman.

EURIPIDES: Some rather nasty trouble's been cooked up for me.

KINSMAN: What kind?

EURIPIDES: This very day it will be adjudged: shall Euripides live or shall he
die? 95

KINSMAN: How could that be? The courts aren't in session today and the
Council isn't sitting. It's the middle day of Thesmophoria!³³

EURIPIDES: And that's exactly why I think I'm done for. The women, you see,
have devised a plot against me, and in the sanctuary of the Thesmophoroi³⁴
they're going to call an assembly³⁵ and vote for my destruction. 100

KINSMAN: Whatever for?

EURIPIDES: Because I write tragedies about them and slander them.³⁶

KINSMAN: Well, it would serve you right, by Poseidon! But what's your
strategy against the women?

EURIPIDES: To persuade the tragic producer Agathon to attend the
Thesmophoria. 105

KINSMAN [after a pause]: To do what? Tell me.

EURIPIDES: To go to the women's assembly and say whatever's necessary on my behalf!

KINSMAN: Openly or in disguise?

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EURIPIDES [impatiently]: In disguise, dressed up like a woman.

KINSMAN: A pretty cute bit; just your style. You guys take the cake for craftiness!

EURIPIDES: Shh!

KINSMAN: What?

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EURIPIDES: Agathon's coming out.

[Agathon, reclining on a chaise longue, is wheeled out of the house on the ekkyklema; he is a languid, beardless young man, dressed in sexually ambivalent fashion and surrounded by feminine paraphernalia.]

KINSMAN: Where is he?

EURIPIDES [Puzzled]: Where? There, the man who's being rolled out!

KINSMAN: I must be blind; I can't see any man there at all, only the whore Kyrene!

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[Agathon begins to tune up his voice.]

EURIPIDES: Shh! He's getting ready to sing an aria.

KINSMAN: Is that ant-tracks³⁷ or some kind of vocalizing?

AGATHON [singing the parts both of a chorus of Trojan maidens and their leader]:³⁸

[as leader]

Maidens, receive the torch of the Nether Twain³⁹
and in your freedom dance with ancestral cries!

125

[as chorus]

For which deity hold we our revel?
O say! I'm a very soft touch
when it comes to adoring the gods.

[as leader]

Come now, Muses,⁴⁰ venerate
him who draws arrows golden,
Phoibos, who based our country's vales
in the land of the Simois.⁴¹

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[as chorus]

Take joy in our song most fair,
Phoibos, the first to accept the holy gift
of our musical tribute.

135

[as leader]

Hymn too the maiden born
in the oak-engendering mountains,
Artemis of the wild.⁴²

[as chorus]

In turn I invoke in praise
the holy spawn of Leto,
Artemis untried in bed!

140

[as leader]

Yes Leto, and the chords of the Asian lyre,
beating nicely against the beat,
with the Phrygian Graces nodding time!

[as chorus]

I venerate Lady Leto
and the kithara, mother of hymns,
renowned for its masculine clangor.

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[as leader]

Because of thee, kithara, and by virtue
of thy startling vociferation
did the light of joy whisk
from the eyes of the gods.
Wherefore glorify Lord Phoibos!

150

[as chorus]

Hail, happy scion of Leto!

KINSMAN: Holy Genetyllides,⁴³ what a pretty song! How feministic and deep-kissed and tongue-tickled! Just hearing it brought a tingle to my very butt!⁴⁴ And you, young lad—if that's what you are—I want to ask you a question out of Aischylos' *Lykourgos Trilogy*:⁴⁵ Whence comes this femme? What's its homeland? What its dress? What this confoundment of nature? What does the lute have to chat about with the party dress? Or the lyre with the hairnet? Here's a bottle of aftershave—and a brassiere! How un—fitting! And what's this community of mirror and sword? And you yourself, child: are you being raised male? Then where's your dick? Your suit? Your Spartan shoes? All

155

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right, say you're a woman. Then where are your tits? Well? Why don't you answer? Must I find you out from your song, since you yourself refuse to speak?

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AGATHON: Old man, old man! I hear thy envious mockery, yet feel no pain thereat. My clothing always matches my thoughts. To be a poet a man must suit his fashions to the requirements of his plays. If, say, he's writing plays about women, his body must partake of women's ways.

KINSMAN: So, if you're writing about Phaidra, you straddle your boyfriend?⁴⁶

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AGATHON: If one writes of manly matters, that element of the body is at hand. But qualities we do not have must be sought by mimicry.

KINSMAN: Well, let me know when you're writing about satyrs.⁴⁷ I'll get behind you with my hard-on and show you how.

AGATHON: Besides, 'tis uncultivated for a poet to look loutish and shaggy. Observe that the renowned Ibykos and Anakreon of Teos and Alkaios,⁴⁸ who seasoned their harmonies like chefs, used to wear bonnets and disport themselves in Ionian style. [*The Kinsman scratches his head in puzzlement.*] And Phrynichos⁴⁹—you must have heard of him—was both beautiful and beautifully dressed. And that's why his plays are also beautiful. For as we are made, so must we compose.

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KINSMAN: That must be why the revolting Philokles writes so revoltingly, and the base Xenokles so basely, or the frigid Theognis so frigidly!

AGATHON: By absolute necessity. And recognizing this, I doctored myself.

KINSMAN [*alarmed*]: How, for heaven's sake?

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EURIPIDES: Stop your barking! I was the same way at his age, when I began to write.

KINSMAN: God, I don't envy you your rearing!

EURIPIDES [*to Agathon*]: All right, let me tell you why I've come.

AGATHON: Do say.

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EURIPIDES: Agathon, the wise man knows how to say much in a few well-trimmed words. Smitten by fresh misfortune, I am come a suppliant to thy door.

AGATHON: What is thy need?

EURIPIDES: The women at the Thesmophoria are preparing to destroy me this very day, because I slander them.

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AGATHON: What way, then, can we be of aid to thee?

EURIPIDES: Every way! If you sit in on the women's meeting covertly—since you'll pass as a woman—and rebut their accusations against me, you'll surely be my salvation. For you alone could speak in a manner worthy of me. 200

AGATHON: Then why don't you go and make your own defense?

EURIPIDES: I'll tell you. First, I'm well known. Second, I'm an old grey-beard. You, by contrast, are good-looking, pale, clean-shaven, soft, presentable, and you sound like a woman.

AGATHON: Euripides— 205

EURIPIDES: Well?

AGATHON: —you yourself once wrote, “You love life, son: you think your father doesn't?”⁵⁰

EURIPIDES: I did.

AGATHON: Then hope not that I shall bear thy trouble for thee. I'd have to be crazy!⁵¹ No, you yourself must see to your own affairs. Misfortune should by rights be confronted not with tricky contrivances but in a spirit of submission. 210

KINSMAN: You certainly got your wide asshole, you faggot, not with words but in the “spirit of submission”! 215

EURIPIDES: What is it that makes you afraid to go to that particular place?

AGATHON: I would perish more wretchedly than you!

EURIPIDES: Why?

AGATHON: Why, you ask? I'd look to be stealing the nocturnal doings of women and absconding with the female Kypriis.⁵² 220

KINSMAN: “Stealing” he says! Getting fucked is more like it, by Zeus! Still, his excuse is pretty plausible.

EURIPIDES [to Agathon]: Well, then? Will you do it?

AGATHON: Don't count on it.

EURIPIDES [with one forearm over his eyes]: Thrice-wretched me, oh, thus to perish! 225

KINSMAN: Euripides! Dearest fellow! Kinsman! Don't give up on yourself!

EURIPIDES [sobbing]: But what will I do?

KINSMAN: Well, tell this guy to go to hell, and put me to use however you want.

EURIPIDES [*dropping his forearm*]: Well, now! You've signed yourself over to me, 230
so take off your clothes.⁵³

KINSMAN [*complying*]: OK, they're on the ground. But what do you mean to do to me?

EURIPIDES [*pointing to the Kinsman's beard*]: To shave this off, and [*pointing to the Kinsman's lower trunk*] singe you down below. 235

KINSMAN [*visibly shaken*]: Well, if that's your decision, go ahead; if I say no I shouldn't have promised my services in the first place.

EURIPIDES: Agathon, you've always got razors with you; how about lending us one?

AGATHON: Take one yourself—they're right there in the razor-case. 240

EURIPIDES: You're a true gentleman. [*After opening a large box which sits by Agathon's chaise and selecting a long razor and a strop, he takes a small chair from under Agathon's dressing-table and turns to the Kinsman.*] Sit down. [*Stropping the razor*] Blow out your cheek. The right one. [*He shaves off the beard on the Kinsman's right cheek.*]

KINSMAN [*whimpering*]: Oh no! 245

EURIPIDES [*crossly*]: What's this bellyaching? If you don't quiet down I'll have to stick a peg in your mouth! [*He prepares to shave the other cheek.*]

KINSMAN [*getting up and running away*]: Ayeeee!

EURIPIDES: Hey! Where are you running off to?

KINSMAN: To the shrine of the Venerable Goddesses!⁵⁴ 'Cause, by Demeter, I'm 250
not about to sit here getting cut up!

EURIPIDES: Then won't you look ridiculous, walking around with one side of your face shaved!

KINSMAN: I don't care!

EURIPIDES: In the name of heaven, don't let me down! Come back here! 255

KINSMAN [*walking resignedly back and resuming his seat*]: What a fix I'm in!

EURIPIDES: Now hold still and tilt your head back. [*He shaves the other cheek.*] Don't squirm!

KINSMAN [*squealing through closed lips*]: Mmmmmmmmm.

EURIPIDES: What are you mmmmmmmmm-ing for? It's done, and you look fine! 260

KINSMAN: Damn it all, when I rejoin my regiment I'll literally be a leatherneck!

EURIPIDES: Don't worry about it: you'll be so good-looking! [*Taking a mirror from Agathon's box*] Want to see yourself?

KINSMAN: OK, if you like. [*He takes the mirror and peers into it.*] 265

EURIPIDES: You see yourself?

KINSMAN [*horrified*]: God no! I see Kleisthenes!⁵⁵

EURIPIDES: Get up now. I've got to singe you, so bend over.⁵⁶

KINSMAN: Oh me oh my, I'm going to be a roast pig!⁵⁷

EURIPIDES [*calling to the open door of Agathon's house*]: Somebody bring out a torch or a lamp! [*A slave brings out a lighted torch and hands it to Euripides. To the Kinsman*] Bend over. Now watch out for the tip of your dick. 270

KINSMAN: I'll watch out, by Zeus—[*Euripides applies the torch to his backside*] except that I'm on fire! Oh no, no! [*To the audience*] Water! Water, neighbors, before somebody else's asshole catches fire! 275

EURIPIDES: Be brave!

KINSMAN: How am I supposed to be brave when I'm being turbo-vulcanized?

EURIPIDES: There's nothing much left; you've suffered through the worst part.

KINSMAN: Phew! [*Running his hand along his backside and then looking at it*] Oh, the soot! All around my crotch I'm charred! 280

EURIPIDES [*pointing to the audience*]: Don't worry, somebody else will sponge it off.

KINSMAN: Anyone tries to wipe my ass for me, he'll be sorry!

EURIPIDES: Agathon, since you refuse to offer yourself, at least loan us a dress for this fellow here, and a brassiere; you can't deny you've got them. 285

AGATHON: Take them and use them; I don't mind.

KINSMAN [*rummaging through Agathon's box*]: Which one should I take?

EURIPIDES [*joining him*]: Hmm. This party dress here; try it on first.

KINSMAN: By Aphrodite,⁵⁸ it smells good—like little pricks. Help me belt it up.

EURIPIDES: Now pass me the brassiere. 290

AGATHON: Here.

KINSMAN: Come on, arrange the pleats around my legs.

EURIPIDES: We need a hairnet and a hat.

AGATHON: Even better, this wig I wear at night!

EURIPIDES: By god, that's just the thing! 295

KINSMAN [putting it on and primping]: Well, how do I look?

EURIPIDES: Perfect! [To Agathon] Let's have a wrap.

AGATHON: There's one on the couch here.

EURIPIDES: He needs pumps.

AGATHON [removing his own]: Take mine. 300

KINSMAN: Will they fit me? [Puts them on.] You obviously like a loose fit.

AGATHON: Settle that for yourself; now you have what you need. [He claps his hands.] Someone roll me back inside, on the double!

[The ekkyklema rolls back inside the house, the door closing behind it.]

EURIPIDES: Our gentleman here is a real lady, at least in looks. But when you talk, be sure your voice sounds feminine, and be convincing! 305

KINSMAN: I'll try.⁵⁹

EURIPIDES: Off with you now! [He begins to walk off toward the wings.]

KINSMAN [following him]: Apollo, no!⁶⁰ First you've got to promise me—

EURIPIDES: Promise what?

KINSMAN: that you'll use any and all means to help save me if anything bad befalls me. 310

EURIPIDES: I swear then by Aether, Abode of Zeus!⁶¹

KINSMAN [disdainfully]: Why not swear instead by Hippokrates' apartment building?

EURIPIDES: I swear then by all the gods bar none! 315

KINSMAN: Well then, remember that thy heart hath sworn and not merely thy tongue, and I didn't get the promise only from your tongue!⁶²

EURIPIDES: Will you please get going! There's the signal for the assembly over at the Thesmophorion! As for me, I'm off.

[Euripides exits through the wings. Stage-hands transform the scene-building to represent the Assembly Room of the Thesmophorion and set up a dais and chairs at center-stage. Meanwhile, women (the Herald, Mika, Second Woman, Mania holding Mika's baby) enter from one wing and move toward the chairs. The Kinsman heads for center-stage too, talking in falsetto to an imaginary maid.]⁶³

KINSMAN:⁶⁴ Come along this way, Thraitta. Oh Thraitta, look! The torches are burning, and such a lot of smoke rises toward the sanctuary! Thesmophorian Goddesses, surpassingly lovely, grant that good luck attend me both coming here and going home again! Thraitta, put down the box and take out the cake, so I can make an offering to the Twain Goddesses. [Miming an offering] Demeter, reverend Mistress mine, and Pherephatta,⁶⁵ grant me plenty for plenty of sacrifices to you, and if not, grant at least that I get away with this! And may my daughter Pussy⁶⁶ meet a man who's rich but childishly stupid, and may my son Dick have a mind and a heart!⁶⁷ [Reaching the chairs at center-stage] Now where do I find a good seat for hearing everything the speakers say? You go away from here, Thraitta; no slaves are allowed to listen to the speeches. 320 325 330

[The Kinsman takes a seat among the women, who begin to chatter excitedly.]⁶⁸

PARODOS

[The Chorus, carrying torches,⁶⁹ enter the orchestra; as they arrange themselves, the priestess in charge of the assembly mounts the dais in front to the stage-building.]

KRITYLLA:⁷⁰ Observe ritual silence; ritual silence please! Offer your prayers to the Twain Thesmophorian Goddesses, to Wealth, to Kalligeneia, to Kourotophos, to Hermes and to the Graces,⁷¹ that this assembly and today's convocation be conducted in the finest and most excellent manner, a great benefit to the Athenian polis and fortunate for us ourselves. And may victory in the debate go to her whose actions and whose counsel best serve the sovereign people of the Athenians and the sovereign people of the women.⁷² Be this your prayer, and for yourselves all good things. *Ié Paion, ié Paion, ié Paion!* Let's have a grand time! 335 340

CHORUS:

We say amen to that and ask
the race of gods to signal
their pleasure at our prayers.
Zeus of the grand name and you,
god of the golden lyre

who live on holy Delos,⁷³
 and you, almighty Maiden
 with the gleaming eyes and golden spearpoint,⁷⁴
 who dwell in a polis you fought for,⁷⁵
 come this way! 350
 And you, goddess of many names,
 slayer of beasts,
 seed of Leto with the golden eyes,⁷⁶
 and you, august master Poseidon,
 who rule the brine, 355
 quit now the fishy deep
 so lashable to frenzy,
 and you, daughters of marine Nereus,
 and you nymphs who range the mountains!
 May Apollo's golden lyre resound 360
 in harmony with our prayers,
 and may we well-born women of Athens
 hold a faultless meeting!

KRITYLLA:⁷⁷ Pray to the Olympian gods and to the Olympian goddesses, to the
 Pythian gods and Pythian goddesses, to the Delian gods and Delian god- 365
 desses, and to the other gods as well. If anyone conspires in any way to harm
 the people of the women; or negotiates secretly with Euripides and the
 Medes⁷⁸ in any way to the women's harm; or contemplates either becoming a
 tyrant or abetting a tyrant's installation; or denounces a woman who has
 passed off another's child as her own;⁷⁹ or is a mistress' go-between slave 370
 who spills the beans to the master or when sent with a message delivers it
 wrong; or is a lover who deceives a woman with lies or reneges on promised
 gifts; or is an old woman who gives gifts to a young lover;⁸⁰ or is a courtesan
 who takes gifts from her lover and then betrays him; or is a barman or 375
 barmaid who sells short pints or litres:⁸¹ put a curse on every such person,
 that they perish wretchedly and their families along with them! As for the
 rest of you, ask the gods to give you every blessing!

CHORUS:

Our prayers are like yours:
 that what we pray for will be fully accomplished
 for the polis and for the people as well; 380
 and that she who advises best, deserving
 to prevail, will prevail.
 But she who deceives us
 and breaks her solemn oaths for profit;

or tries to substitute decrees for laws; 385
 or reveals our secrets to our enemies;
 or to make money invites the Medes in,
 to our harm: all such are impious
 and culpable in the city's eyes.⁸²
 O Zeus all-powerful, ratify these prayers, 390
 array the gods on our side,
 although we are but women!

EPISODE

KRITYLLA: Attention, everyone! The Women's Assembly—Archikleia
 presiding, Lysilla being secretary, Sostrate proposing⁸³—has passed the 395
 following motion: an Assembly will be held on the morning of the second
 day of Thesmophoria, when we have the most free time,⁸⁴ its principal
 agenda being deliberation about the punishment of Euripides, who in the
 view of us all is a criminal. Now who wishes to speak to this question?⁸⁵

MIKA [*rising from her chair and approaching the platform*]: I do.

KRITYLLA [*handing her a garland*]: Put this on first, then speak. 400

CHORUS-LEADER: Quiet! Silence! Pay attention, because she's clearing her
 throat just as the politicians do. It's likely she'll deliver a long speech.

MIKA [*assuming an oratorical posture*]: By the Twain, I have not risen to speak,
 fellow women, out of any personal ambition; no, but because I have for a
 long time unhappily endured seeing you dragged through the mire by 405
 Euripides,⁸⁶ that son of a woman who sells wild herbs⁸⁷ and whose own
 reputation is everywhere and everywhere bad. With what evil has this fellow
 not besmirched us? Where, on any occasion where there are spectators,
 tragic actors and choruses, has he spared us his disparagement, that we are 410
 lover-bangers, nymphos, wine-oglers, disloyal, chatterbox, unwholesome, the
 bane of men's lives? It's gotten so that as soon as our men get home from
 the grandstand they start right in giving us suspicious looks and searching
 the house for a concealed lover. We can no longer do anything that we used
 to do before, so terrible are the things this man has taught our husbands
 about us.⁸⁸ So if a wife so much as weaves a garland, she's suspected of having 415
 a lover, and if she drops some utensil as she moves around the house, the
 husband asks, "Who's the pot being broken for? 'Tis sure in honor of our
 Korinthian guest!"⁸⁹ A girl gets sick, and right away her brother says, "This
 maiden's hue doth please me not at all!"⁹⁰ There's more. A childless wife

wants to pass off another's baby as her own and can't even get away with that, 420
 because now our husbands plant themselves nearby. He's slandered us to the
 old men too, who used to marry young girls; now no old man wants to get
 married because of the line, "The elderly bridegroom takes himself a boss."⁹¹
 Then, because of this man, men put locks and bolts on their women's doors
 to guard them, and not only that, they raise Molossic hounds as scarecrows 425
 to repel lovers. Even that stuff might be forgiven. But not when we're no
 longer allowed even to do what used to be our own jobs: keeping household
 inventory and removing supplies on our own, flour, oil, wine,⁹² because our
 husbands now carry the housekeys with them—complicated, nasty things
 with triple teeth, imported from Sparta. Before, we had no trouble opening 430
 the door just by getting a signet ring made for three obols.⁹³ But now their
 household spy, Euripides, has taught them to use little seals made of complex
 wormholes, which they carry around fastened to their clothes. Accordingly,
 I propose that one way or another we brew up some kind of destruction
 for this man, either poisons or some particular technique whereby he gets 435
 destroyed. This then is the argument of my speech; the rest I will enter into
 the draft of my resolution with the Secretary's assistance. [*She returns the garland*
to Kritylla and returns to her chair.]

CHORUS:

I've never heard a woman
 more intricate of mind 440
 or more impressive as a speaker.
 Everything she says is right.
 She's reviewed all sides of the case;
 she's considered everything intelligently;
 she's sagaciously found a whole spectrum 445
 of well-chosen arguments.
 So if Xenokles, Karkinos' son,⁹⁴
 should vie with her at speaking,
 I think that all of you would find him
 absolutely overmatched. 450

[*Another woman rises from her chair, takes the garland from the Herald and mounts the platform.*]

WOMAN: I take my turn before you to make but a few remarks, since I have
 little to add to the previous speaker's cogent indictment. But I do want to
 share with you my own personal sufferings. My husband died in Cyprus,
 leaving me with five small children that I've had a struggle to feed by
 weaving garlands in the myrtle-market. Still, until recently I managed to 455
 make do, but now this man who composes poetry in the tragedy-market⁹⁵

has persuaded the men that gods don't exist, so that my sales are down more than 50%.⁹⁶ I therefore urge and advise all women to punish this man for his many crimes, for wild are his attacks upon us, since he himself was raised among wild herbs.⁹⁷ But I must be going to the market: some men have ordered twenty garlands. [*She steps down, hands her garland to the Herald and exits.*]

CHORUS:

This second courageous testimony
turns out to be even classier than the first!
The stuff she prattled about wasn't irrelevant,
owned good sense and close-woven thought,
wasn't silly but altogether convincing!
For this outrage the man must pay us the penalty
in no uncertain terms!

[*The Kinsman rises from his chair, takes the garland from Kritylla and mounts the platform.*]

KINSMAN:⁹⁸ That you are so enraged at Euripides, ladies, when he slanders you this way, is hardly surprising, nor that your bile is aboil. Why, let me have no profit in my children if I myself don't hate the man; I'd have to be crazy not to! Still, we should permit open discussion: we're by ourselves and no one will divulge what we say. Why do we bring the man up on these charges and get so angry with him for telling two or three things he knows we do, out of the thousands of other things we actually do? I myself—not to mention anyone else—have a lot of awful things on my conscience. I'll tell you maybe the worst. I'd been married only three days, and my husband was sleeping beside me. But I had a boyfriend, who'd deflowered me when I was seven and still had the hots for me. He came scratching at the door and I knew right away who it was. I start to steal downstairs, and my husband asks, "Why are you going downstairs?" "Why? My stomach's paining me, husband, and aching. So I'm going to the toilet." "Go on then." And he starts grinding up juniper berries, dillweed and sage,⁹⁹ while I oil the door-hinges and go out to meet my lover. Then I bend over, holding onto the laurel tree by Apollo's Pillar,¹⁰⁰ and get my humping. You see, Euripides never said anything about that. Nor does he talk about how we get banged by slaves and mule-grooms when no other man's available, nor how, whenever we spend the night getting thoroughly balled by somebody, we chew garlic in the morning so the husband won't smell anything when he gets home from guard duty and suspect that we've been doing something nasty. That, you see, he's never spoken about. If he abuses Phaidra,¹⁰¹ what do we care? Nor has he ever told the one about how the wife showed her husband her robe to look at against the light, so her lover can scamper all muffled up out of the house; he's never

told about that. And I know another wife who pretended to be in labor for ten days, until she could buy a baby.¹⁰² Meanwhile her husband was running all over town buying medicine to quicken birth, while an old woman brought it in a pot—the baby, I mean—with a honeycomb in its mouth so it wouldn’t cry. Then the old woman gives the signal and the wife yells, “Out you go, out, husband: this time I seem to be giving birth!”¹⁰³ The baby, you see, had kicked the pot’s belly! He ran from the room in joy, she pulled the comb out of its mouth, and it started bawling. Then the dirty old woman who’d brought the baby runs out to the husband, smiling and saying, “You’ve got a lion, sir, a lion, the very image of yourself, sir, with everything a perfect match, little weenie too, shaped like an acorn!”¹⁰⁴ Aren’t these the bad things we do? [*The women gasp in astonishment.*] By Artemis, we do too! And then we get mad at Euripides, though we suffer less than our deeds deserve! [*He hands the garland to Kritylla and returns to his seat.*]

CHORUS:

This is really astonishing!
Where was she dug up?
What land brought forth
a woman so audacious?
I’d never have imagined
she’d unscrupulously say
this kind of thing among us
so openly and brazenly—
what unheard-of nerve!
Now I’ve seen it all;
the old proverb is true:
you’ve got to look under every rock,
or you might be bitten by a politician.¹⁰⁵

CHORUS-LEADER: No, there’s nothing worse in every way than women born shameless¹⁰⁶—save the rest of women!¹⁰⁷

MIKA [*standing up*]: No, by Aglauros!¹⁰⁸ Women, you’re not thinking straight; you’ve been bewitched, or something else is wrong with you, if you let this pest get away with slandering all of us so outrageously! [*Surveying the spectators.*] Is there anyone out there who’ll . . . well, if not [*appealing to the women*], we ourselves, with our slave-girls, will get a hot coal somewhere and singe the hair off this woman’s pussy—that’ll teach her never again to badmouth her fellow women!

KINSMAN [*standing and backing up against the platform*]: No, ladies, please, not my pussy! If all of us who are citizen women are allowed to speak freely,¹⁰⁹ and if

I merely spoke on Euripides' behalf what I know to be fair, is that a reason why you should punish me by depilation?

MIKA: So you shouldn't be punished? You, the only woman with the effrontery to contradict us about a man who's done us such wrong by purposely finding stories where a woman turns out bad, by creating Melanippes¹¹⁰ and Phaidras.¹¹¹ But he's never created a Penelope,¹¹² because she was a woman famous for her virtue. 535

KINSMAN: Well, I can tell you why: you can't cite me a single Penelope among all the women now alive; absolutely all of us are Phaidras! 540

MIKA: Women, hear how the hussy insults us all, again and again!

KINSMAN: By god, I haven't yet told everything I know: you want to hear more?

MIKA: You can't have anything else to say: you've poured out every drop of what you know. 545

KINSMAN: Not even the ten-thousandth part of what we do. For example, I haven't mentioned, you know, how we use bath-scrapers as scoops to siphon off grain—

MIKA: You should be whipped for that remark!

KINSMAN: —or how we give cutlets from the Apatouria Feast¹¹³ to our go-betweens and then say the cat took them— 550

MIKA: Oh me oh my, what nonsense!

KINSMAN: —or how another woman bashed her husband with an axe, I haven't mentioned that; or how another woman drugged her husband and made him insane; or how one time an Acharnian woman buried under the tub— 555

MIKA: I hope you die!

KINSMAN: —her own father—

MIKA: Must we listen to this?

KINSMAN: —or how your slave-girl had a baby boy and you passed it off as your own, and gave your own baby girl to the slave? 560

MIKA: By the Twain, you won't get away with saying this—I'll pluck out your short and curlies with my own hands!

KINSMAN: Don't you lay a hand on me!



MIKA [marching menacingly toward him]: Just watch me! 565

KINSMAN [rolling up his sleeves]: Just watch me!

MIKA [removing her jacket]: Hold my jacket, Philiste.

KINSMAN: So much as touch me and by Artemis I'll—

MIKA: You'll what?

KINSMAN: That sesame-cake you gulped down, I'll make you shit it out! 570

KRITYLLA: Stop abusing each other! A woman is running toward the meeting in a hurry. Before this gets to be a brawl I want you quiet, so we can hear what she has to say in an orderly fashion.

[Enter Kleisthenes, a beardless and effeminately dressed man.]¹¹⁴

KLEISTHENES: Dear women, my kindred in lifestyle, my devotion to you is evident from my clean jowls. For I am crazy about women and represent your interests always.¹¹⁵ This time, I've heard of a grave business concerning you that's being chattered about in the marketplace, and I am here to apprise you of it and to inform you, so that you may consider and take steps to forestall a great and terrible trouble that threatens to befall you while your guard's down. 580

KRITYLLA: What is it, my boy?—and I may fittingly call you boy, since your jowls are not armored with a beard.

KLEISTHENES: I'm told that Euripides has sent a kinsman of his, an old man, up here this very day.

KRITYLLA: To do what, and for what reason? 585

KLEISTHENES: To be a spy, eavesdropping on whatever you women discuss and plan to do.

KRITYLLA: And just how could a man go unnoticed in the women's assembly?

KLEISTHENES: Euripides singed him and plucked him, and decked him out exactly like a woman. 590

KINSMAN [rising from his seat]: Do you believe what he says? What man would be fool enough to stand still for a plucking? I for one doubt it, ye Two Honorable Goddesses!

KLEISTHENES: Rubbish! I wouldn't have come here with this news if I hadn't heard it from knowledgeable sources. 595

KRITYLLA: It's a terrible business that's reported. Well, women, we mustn't sit around doing nothing! We've got to look for this man and find out where he's been sitting unnoticed in his disguise. [To Kleisthenes] And you, our representative, help us in the search: you'll double our debt of gratitude to you! 600

KLEISTHENES [to Mika]: Let's see, you first: who are you?

KINSMAN [aside]: How do I get out of here?

MIKA: You want to know who I am? I'm Kleonymos' wife.¹¹⁶

KLEISTHENES: Do all of you recognize this woman? 605

KRITYLLA: Yes, we know her; question the others.

KLEISTHENES: Then you've all got to be questioned!

KINSMAN [aside]: What terrible luck!

KLEISTHENES: This one: who is she? The one with the baby?

MIKA: She's my wet nurse. 610

KINSMAN [aside]: I'm done for! [He begins to sneak away toward the stage-door.]

KLEISTHENES [to the KINSMAN]: You there! Where are you going? Stay where you are! [The Kinsman begins to writhe uncomfortably.] What's the matter?

KINSMAN: Let me go piss. [Kleisthenes offers his arm.] You're a pretty rude fellow! 615

KLEISTHENES: All right, then, go ahead; I'll wait for you here. [The Kinsman enters the stage-building.]

KRITYLLA: Yes, wait for her, and watch her closely. She's the only woman, sir, that we don't recognize.

KLEISTHENES [to the door]: You're certainly taking a long time to piss! 620

KINSMAN [from within]: Yes, my good man, I am: I'm retaining water; ate cress-seeds yesterday.

KLEISTHENES: Cress-seeds? Come out here, I want to talk to you!

[The Kinsman comes out, and Kleisthenes takes him by the arm.]

KINSMAN [shaking off Kleisthenes' hand]: Why are you pulling me about when I'm not feeling well? 625

KLEISTHENES: Tell me, who is your husband?

KINSMAN: You want to know who my husband is? Well, you know him; guy from Kothokidai?¹¹⁷

KLEISTHENES: Guy? Who?

KINSMAN: He's a guy, who once, a guy who was the son of a guy— 630

KLEISTHENES: I think you're babbling. Have you been here before?

KINSMAN: Sure, every year.

KLEISTHENES: And who's your roommate here?

KINSMAN: Mine? A gal.

KLEISTHENES: Damn it all, you're making no sense! 635

MIKA [to Kleisthenes]: Step aside; I'll give this gal a good grilling about last year's festivities. Come on, stand well away, so you won't overhear what a man mustn't know about. [To the Kinsman] Now, you: tell me which of the holy things was revealed to us first.

KINSMAN: Let's see now, what was the first thing? We had a drink. 640

MIKA: And what was the second?

KINSMAN: We drank a toast.¹¹⁸

MIKA: Somebody told you! And what was the third?

KINSMAN: Xenylla asked for a potty because there wasn't a urinal.¹¹⁹

MIKA: Wrong! Come here, Kleisthenes: this is the man you're after! 645

KLEISTHENES: Well, what do I do now?

MIKA: Strip him: his story's fishy. [Kleisthenes removes the Kinsman's dress; the Kinsman hides his phallus between his legs.]

KINSMAN: So you'd actually strip a mother of nine?

KLEISTHENES: Get that brassiere off, quickly. 650

KINSMAN: You shamelessness, you!

[Kleisthenes removes the brassiere.]

MIKA: She's really stocky and looks strong. And by Zeus, her tits aren't like ours!

KINSMAN: That's because I'm sterile—never been pregnant.

MIKA: Really! Just now you were the mother of nine! 655

KLEISTHENES: Stand up straight! Where are you hiding your cock down there?

MIKA [*running behind the Kinsman*]: Here it is! Its head is sticking out—nice color, too, deary!

KLEISTHENES [*joining Mika*]: Where?

[*The Kinsman pulls his phallus from between his legs.*]

MIKA: Now it's gone back in front!

660

[*Kleisthenes runs to the front, and the Kinsman pushes the phallus back between his legs.*]

KLEISTHENES: It's not up here!

MIKA: No, it's back here again!

KLEISTHENES: That's some isthmus you've got there, buddy! You drag your cock back and forth more than the Corinthians drag their ships!

MIKA: What a degenerate! That's why he spoke up for Euripides and insulted us!

665

KINSMAN: I'm done for! What a mess I've tumbled into!

MIKA [*to Kleisthenes*]: All right, what now?

KLEISTHENES: Put him under close guard, and see that he doesn't escape. I'll go and report this to the authorities.

670

[*Exit Kleisthenes; the Herald and other women enter the stage house (i.e. the sanctuary); Mika and Mania, holding the baby, stand guard over the Kinsman.*]

CHORUS-LEADER: Well, after this our job is to light these torches, take off our jackets and gird up right manfully to find out if any other man has managed to get in here; to go over every inch of the Pnyx;¹²⁰ to search the tents and alleyways of our encampment. So forward march! First launch your feet lightly and inspect everything thoroughly and silently. Just don't take too long: now is the time for decisive action! I'll lead the foray: on the run now, as quick as we can, all around the area!

675

CHORUS [*as they dance about the orchestra searching*]:

Move out then! If still another man
lurks about the place without our knowledge,
track him down and search him out!

680

Cast your eyes in all directions,
up and down, here and there;
give everything a good examination!

If we catch him in such sacrilege,
 he'll be punished, and more than that: 685
 to other men he'll be an example
 of violence, injustice and impiety!
 He'll have to admit the gods clearly exist;
 he'll be a lesson to all other men
 to revere the gods and justly perform 690
 what divine and human law require,
 taking care to do what's good.

And here's what happens if they don't:
 any man caught in an impious act
 will burn and rage in rabid insanity, 695
 his every act a manifest proof
 for women and mortals to see
 that lawlessness and sacrilege
 are punished on the spot by god!

CHORUS-LEADER: Well, we seem to have given everything a thorough 700
 inspection. In any case, there's no sign of any other man lurking
 hereabouts.

*[The Kinsman suddenly grabs Mika's baby and runs with it to the altar in the orchestra.]*¹²¹

MIKA: Hey! Hey! Where do you think you're going? Stop, you! Stop! Oh my
 god! He's gone and snatched the baby right from the tit!

KINSMAN: Scream away! You'll never feed it again if you don't let me go! Nay, 705
 right here and now, smitten to his crimson veins by this bodkin midst the
 thigh-bones, shall he begore the altar!

MIKA: Heavens me! *[To the chorus]* Women, help! Raise a great war-cry and rout
 the foeman, nor overlook me bereft of mine only child!

CHORUS:
 Ah! Ah! August Fates, what novel horror do I behold? 710

CHORUS-LEADER: The whole world is full of impudence and brass! What a
 deed he's done this time, fellow women, what a deed!

KINSMAN: A deed that'll knock the stuffing out of your arrogance!

CHORUS-LEADER: Isn't this an awful business, and worse than awful?

MIKA: Awful indeed! He's gone and snatched my baby from me! 715

CHORUS:

What can we say of a deed like this,
when deeds like this cause him no shame?

KINSMAN: And you've yet to see my worst!

CHORUS:

Well, wherever you came from,
you won't be getting back there so easily 720
and boasting that you did such a deed,
then gave us the slip. No, you'll get yours!

KINSMAN: I pray to god that never ever happens!

CHORUS:

Who, I say, who of the immortal gods
would come to the aid of a wrongdoer? 725

KINSMAN: Your point is moot anyway. [*Holding up the baby.*] I'll never give up
this baby girl!

CHORUS:

But mayhap soon, by the Twain Goddesses,
your outrage will bring you no joy,
nor the unholy speech you utter 730
at your godless work:
for we shall pay you back
for all this, as is fitting.
Your luck has suddenly turned around
and aims disaster at you! 735

CHORUS-LEADER [*to Mika and Mania*]: Come on, you should take these torches
and fetch some wood, and then burn the bastard down and incinerate him at
once!

MIKA: Let's go get the firewood, Mania!¹²² [*To the Kinsman*] In a minute
I'll turn you into a shower of sparks! [*Mika and Mania go into the*
scene-building.] 740

KINSMAN: Light me up and burn me down! [*To the baby*] And you, get this
Cretan swaddling off. For your death, child, blame but a single woman: your
mother! [*He removes the swaddling.*] What's this? The baby girl's turned into a
skin full of wine, and wearing Persian booties to boot!¹²³ Women, ye over- 745
heated dipsomaniacs, never passing up a chance to wangle a drink, a great

boon to bartenders but a bane to us—not to mention our dishes and our woollens!

[Mika and Mania reenter with arms full of firewood.]

MIKA: Pile them up nice and high, Mania. [They begin to lay the wood around the altar.]

750

KINSMAN: Go ahead, pile them. But tell me one thing [pointing to the baby]: do you claim to have given birth to this?

MIKA: Carried it all nine months myself.

KINSMAN: You carried it?

MIKA: I swear by Artemis!

755

KINSMAN: How big was it? [He holds up the wineskin.] A magnum, perhaps?

MIKA: How dare you? You've undressed my child—disgusting!—a tiny baby!

KINSMAN: Tiny? It is pretty small, by Zeus. How many years old? Three Wine-Jug Festivals or four?¹²⁴

MIKA: That's about right, plus a Dionysia. Give her back to me.

760

KINSMAN [laying his hand on the altar]: No, by Apollo here!¹²⁵

MIKA: We'll have to incinerate you, then.

KINSMAN: By all means. Incinerate away. [He produces a long knife.] But this little girl will get sacrificed on the spot!

MIKA: Don't do it, I beseech you! Do what you want with me, but spare her!

765

KINSMAN: You've a good mother's instincts. But nonetheless this girl's going to get her throat cut.

MIKA: Ah, my baby! Give me the slaughter-bowl, Mania, so I can at least catch my own child's blood! [Mika passes her the bowl.]

KINSMAN: Hold it under there—I'll do you this one favor. [The Kinsman slashes the wineskin with a sacrificer's stroke, letting the wine flow into the bowl.]

770

MIKA: Damn you to hell! You're hateful and cruel!

KINSMAN [holding up the empty wineskin]: The hide here goes to the priestess.¹²⁶

[Enter Kritylla.]

KRITYLLA: What goes to the priestess?

KINSMAN: This—catch! [Tosses the skin to Kritylla.] 775

KRITYLLA: Poor, poor Mika! Who's ungirled you? Who's drained out your only lass?

MIKA: This criminal here! But since you're here, stand guard over him, so I can get hold of Kleisthenes and tell the authorities what this man has done. [Mika and Mania exit through the wings, leaving Kritylla in charge of the Kinsman.]¹²⁷ 780

KINSMAN: Now what's my plan for saving myself? What move? What scheme? The man who got me involved in this mess in the first place is nowhere to be seen. Let's see—whom could I send to him with a message? [He ponders.] I know! The way it was done in *Palamedes*!¹²⁸ I'll write my message on oar-blades too, and throw them into the sea! But I haven't got those oar-blades here. Where could I get some? [He looks around at the scenery.] Aha! What if instead of oar-blades I wrote on these votive tablets and then tossed them in all directions! [He plucks several tablets off the wall of the scene-building.] That's much better! They're wooden too, just like oar-blades! [He picks up the tablets and the knife.] 785
790

Hands of mine,
now's the time
to put your hand
to the work of my salvation!

[carving on the tablets]

Tablets of planed board, 795
accept the knife's scratchings,
harbingers of my troubles!
Damn! This R is a troublemaker!
There we go, there we go!
What a scratch! 800

[tossing the tablets in all directions]

Be off then, travel every road,
this way and that.
You've got to come quickly!

[He sits down to wait for Euripides.]

PARABASIS¹²⁹

CHORUS-LEADER [to the spectators]: Well, let's step forward and sing our own praises!¹³⁰ We'd better, because every single man blames the female race for a host of evils, claiming that we're entirely bad for humanity and the source of 805

all ills: disputes, quarrels, bitter factionalism, distress, war. But really, if we're that bad, why do you marry us? If we're really so bad, why do you forbid us to leave the house or even get caught peeking out the window?¹³¹ Why do you want to keep such a careful eye on something so bad? If the little woman goes out somewhere and you find her outdoors, you have an apoplectic fit instead of toasting the gods and giving thanks, which you would do if you'd really found the bane of your household missing and couldn't find her anywhere in the house. If we fall asleep at a friend's house, tired out from enjoying ourselves,¹³² every husband makes the rounds of the couches looking for what's bad for him. If we peek out of our bedroom windows you all try to get a good look at what's bad; and if we duck back in from embarrassment, you're even more eager to catch a glimpse of what's bad when it peeks out again. Thus it's pretty clear that we're far superior to you, and I've got a way to prove it. Here's a test to see which sex is worse, for we say you are and you say we are. Let's look at the question, then, by juxtaposing any man and any woman and comparing their names. Take Charminos: he's worse than Nausimache¹³³—it goes without saying. And then Kleophon is of course worse in every way than Salabakcho.¹³⁴ And it's been a long time since any of you has even tried to measure up to Aristomache—I mean the one at Marathon—and Stratonike.¹³⁵ Well? Which of last year's Councillors, who handed over his powers to someone else, is better than Euboule?¹³⁶ Not even Anytos would say that! And so we claim to be much better than men. You'll never see a woman drive up to the Akropolis in a chariot after stealing about 50 talents from the public treasury! The most a woman will filch is a cup of flour from her husband, and then she'll pay him back the same day.¹³⁷ [Indicating the spectators] We could point out many men here who do these very things and worse, who are more likely than we are to be potbellies, muggers, spongers, slave-drivers! And when it comes to their patrimony, they're less able to preserve it than we are.¹³⁸ We've still got our looms and weaving rods, our wool-baskets and parasols. Contrast these husbands of ours: most have let their spear-shafts disappear from their houses, points and all, and many others have cast from their shoulders, in the heat of battle, their parasols!¹³⁹ Yes, we women have plenty of justified complaints to lodge against our husbands, one of which is most monstrous. If a woman bears a son who's useful to the polis—a taxiarch or a commander—she ought to be honored in some way and to be given front-row seating at the Stenia and the Skira and any other festivals we women might celebrate.¹⁴⁰ But if a woman bears a son who's a coward and a rascal—a bad trierarch or an incompetent pilot—she ought to sit behind the hero's mother with her hair cropped off. By what logic, o polis, should Hyperbolos' mother,¹⁴¹ dressed in white and wearing her hair long, get to sit near Lamachos' mother and make loans?¹⁴² If she

lends money at interest, no borrower in the world should pay her back but should grab her money by force and tell her, “You’re a fine one to be charging points after discharging such a disappointing son!”

850

EPISODE

KINSMAN: I’ve gone cross-eyed looking for him! But he’s never come. What could be keeping him? No doubt he’s ashamed that his *Palamedes* was a flop. So: which of his plays could I use to entice him? I’ve got it! I’ll do a take-off on his recent *Helen*:¹⁴⁴ I’m certainly *dressed* for that role! [*He puts on a veil.*]

KRITYLLA: What are you cooking up now? Why are you rubbernecking around? You’ll see one hell of a Helen if you don’t behave yourself till a cop gets here!

855

KINSMAN [*singing as Helen*]:¹⁴⁵

These are the fair-maidened currents of the Nile,
that in lieu of heavenly distillment floods the flats
of bright Egypt for a people much given to laxatives.

860

KRITYLLA: By Hekate Torch-Bearer, you’re a villain!

KINSMAN:

The land of my fathers is not without a name:
’tis Sparta, and my sire is Tyndareus.

KRITYLLA: He’s your father, you disaster? More likely it was Phrynonidas.¹⁴⁶

KINSMAN:

And Helen was I named.

865

KRITYLLA: You’re turning into a woman *again*, before you’ve been punished for your first drag show?

KINSMAN:

Many a soul on my account by Scamander’s
streams hath perished.

870

KRITYLLA: You should have been one of them!

KINSMAN:

And I am here, but my own ill-starrèd husband,
Menelaos, has never come for me. So why
do I still live?

KRITYLLA: Because the vultures are lazy!

875

KINSMAN:

Yet something, as 'twere, tickles at my heart:
deceive me not, o Zeus, in my nascent hope!

[Enter Euripides, disguised as Menelaos.]

EURIPIDES:

Who, wielding power in this doughty manse,
would welcome strangers sore beset in the briny
deep midst tempest and shipwrecks?

880

KINSMAN:

These are the halls of Proteus.

KRITYLLA: Proteus, you sorry wretch? [To Euripides] By the Twain Goddesses,
he's lying: Proteas¹⁴⁷ has been dead for ten years!

EURIPIDES:

What land have we put into with our hull?

KINSMAN:

Egypt.

885

EURIPIDES:

Ah wretched, to have made for such a port!

KRITYLLA: Do you believe the ravings of this awful man, condemned to an
awful death? This is the Thesmophorion!

EURIPIDES:

Is lord Proteus within, or out of doors?

890

KRITYLLA: You've got to be still seasick, stranger, if you ask if Proteas is within
or out of doors, when you just heard that he's dead!

EURIPIDES:

Alas, he is dead! Where was he duly entombed?

KINSMAN:

This is his very tomb whereon I sit.

KRITYLLA: Well, die and go to hell—and you will die for daring to call this altar
a tomb!

895

EURIPIDES:

Why dost thou sit upon this sepulchral seat,
veiled in a shroud, strange lady?

KINSMAN:

Against my will am I to serve the bed
of Proteus' son in marriage.

900

KRITYLLA: You villain, why do you keep lying to the stranger? This criminal
came here to the women's meeting, stranger, to snatch their baubles!

KINSMAN:

Bark thou at my person, pelt me with abuse!

EURIPIDES:

Strange lady, what old woman vilifies thee?

KINSMAN:

'Tis Proteus' daughter, Theonoe.

905

KRITYLLA: No, by the Twain Goddesses, I'm Kritylla, daughter of Antitheos,
from Gargettos!¹⁴⁸ [To the Kinsman] And you're a villain!

KINSMAN:

Say what you will, for never shall I wed
your brother and so betray Menelaos, my husband
at Troy.

910

[Euripides approaches the Kinsman.]

EURIPIDES:

What said'st thou, lady? Return my pupils' gaze!

KINSMAN:

I feel shame—for the violation of my jowls.

EURIPIDES:

What can this be? A speechlessness holds me fast!

[He removes the Kinsman's veil.]

O gods, what sight do I see? Who art thou, lady?

KINSMAN:

And who art thou? The same thought strikes us both.

915

EURIPIDES:

Are you Greek, or a native woman?

KINSMAN:

Greek. But I now would learn your story.

EURIPIDES:

I cannot help but see Helen in you, lady!

KINSMAN:

And I Menelaos in you—to judge from your rags!

EURIPIDES:

You have recognized aright the unluckiest of men!

920

[*Euripides embraces the Kinsman.*]

KINSMAN:

O timely come into your own wife's charms!¹⁴⁹

O hold me, hold me, husband, in your arms!

Come, let me kiss you! Take, oh take, oh take

me away posthaste!

[*Euripides takes the Kinsman by the hand and begins to lead him from the altar.*]

KRITYLLA [*blocking their path*]: By the Twain Goddesses, whoever tries to take you away is going to be sorry, after he gets pummeled with this torch!

925

EURIPIDES:

Wouldst thou prevent me my very own wife, the daughter
of Tyndareus, to take to Sparta?

KRITYLLA: Oh my, you strike me as being a villain yourself, and some kind
of ally of this other one! No wonder you kept acting like Egyptians!¹⁵⁰ But
this man is going to pay the price: here comes the marshal and a policeman.

930

EURIPIDES: This is bad. I've got to mosey on out of here.

[*He moves to the wings.*]

KINSMAN: But what about me? What am I going to do?

EURIPIDES: Stay calm. I'll never desert you, as long as I draw breath, or until I
exhaust my vast supply of stratagems! [*Exit Euripides.*]

935

KINSMAN: Well, this particular fishing-line didn't catch much!

[*Enter Marshal and a Policeman armed with a whip, bow and quiver.*]

MARSHAL: So this is the villain that Kleisthenes told us about! [*To the Kinsman*] You!
What are you skulking for? [*To the Policeman*] Archer, take him inside and bind
him on the plank,¹⁵¹ then set him up right here and keep an eye on him. Don't
let anybody get near him. If anybody tries to, take your whip and hit him!

940

KRITYLLA: Do that, by god, because just a minute ago a man did try to make off
with him—a sail-stitcher!

KINSMAN: [*kneeling before the Marshal*]: Marshal, by this right hand of yours—
which you're so fond of cupping in the direction of anyone who might put
silver in it—do me a small favor even though I'm condemned to death! 945

MARSHAL: What favor?

KINSMAN: Tell the policeman he's got to strip me naked before he ties me to
the plank: I'm an old man and I don't want to be left dressed in scarves and
petticoats when the crows eat me—they'd laugh!

MARSHAL: The Council has decreed that you must die wearing these,¹⁵² so that 950
everyone who sees you will know what kind of criminal you are!

KINSMAN: Aieee! O dresses, what ye have wrought! There's no chance I'll be
saved now!

[*The Policeman takes the Kinsman inside; Kritylla and the Marshal exit.*]

CHORAL INTERLUDE

CHORUS-LEADER: All right, now, let's do a cheerful dance, as is the women's
custom here, when in the holy season we celebrate our solemn mysteries 955
for the Twain Goddesses—the very ones Pauson,¹⁵³ too, honors by fasting,
as he joins in our prayer to them that from year to year many more such
celebrations may come his way!

CHORUS:

Let's start our number: go light on your feet,
form up a circle and all join hands; 960
everyone mark the beat of our holy dance
with an agile foot!

Let every dancer arrange herself
so she can look this way and that,
as you celebrate in song and dance 965
the race of Olympian gods.
Let everyone lift her voice,
transported by the dance!

If people expect that we, as women,
will in this sanctuary utter abuse against men, 970
they are wrong!¹⁵⁴

But now we should rather halt
the graceful steps of our circle-dance
and go on to our next number!

- Step out singing for the God with the Lyre¹⁵⁵ 975
 and for Artemis with her Quiver,
 the Chaste Lady.
 Hail, Thou who work from afar,¹⁵⁶
 and grant us victory!¹⁵⁷
 It's right that we also sing for Hera, 980
 fulfiller of marriages,
 who takes part in all our dances
 and holds the passkey to wedlock.
 We ask Hermes the Shepherd
 and Pan and his Nymphs 985
 to smile heartily and enjoy
 this dancing of ours!¹⁵⁸
 So begin the spirited double-time
 in the cause of dancing well:
 let's get into it, ladies, 990
 in the customary fashion—
 we're fasting anyway!
- All right now, jump,
 return with a solid beat,
 take the song in full voice! 995
 Lord Bakchos crowned with ivy
 please personally lead our dance:
 we will hymn you in revels
 that love the dance!
- Noisy Dionysos, 1000
 son of Zeus and Semele,
 who enjoy the charming songs
 of Nymphs as you ramble
 over the mountains—
 evoi evoi evoi!— 1005
 striking up the dances
 all night long!
 And all around you their cries
 echo on Kithairon,
 and the mountains shady with dark leaves 1010
 and the rocky valleys resound.
 And all round you ivy tendrils
 twine in lovely bloom!

EPISODE

[Enter Policeman,¹⁵⁹ dragging the Kinsman, who is now clamped to a plank, feet-first. He props the Kinsman up against the altar.]

POLICEMAN: There, now: you can do your bellyachin' to the open air!

KINSMAN: Officer, I beseech you—

1015

POLICEMAN: Don't seech me!

KINSMAN: Loosen the clamps!

POLICEMAN: No, but I'll do this. [He tightens them.]

KINSMAN: Owwww! Hey, you're tightening them!

POLICEMAN: Want me to keep going?

1020

KINSMAN: Owwww! Ahhh! God damn you!

POLICEMAN: Shut up, you damn geezer! Well, I'm gonna go get a mat, so I can get comfortable while I guard you. [He goes inside.]

KINSMAN: This is the reward I get for befriending Euripides! [Peering into the distance, as if catching sight of something.] Hey, my gods! Savior Zeus, hope is not dead! It looks like the man's not given up: he's sending me a signal by zipping by in the Perseus outfit! I'm supposed to be Andromeda!¹⁶⁰ I'm certainly chained up like her! And he's obviously on his way to rescue me! Otherwise he wouldn't have shot by!

1025

[As Andromeda, singing]

Dear maidens, dear,

1030

how might I escape

unseen by the cop?

Dost hear me,

thou who from the caverns

singest in answer

1035

to my cries?

Permit, allow me

to go home to my wife!

Pitiless he who enchained me,

most sorely tested of mortal men!

1040

I got free of a rotten old hag

only to die anyway!

For this barbarian guard,
 my long-time watcher,
 has hung me out, 1045
 doomed and friendless,
 as food for vultures!
 You see, 'tis not to dance,
 nor yet with girls my age
 to wield the voting-funnel¹⁶¹ 1050
 that I am here;
 nay rather enchained
 in tight bondage
 am I set out as fodder
 for the monster Glauketes!¹⁶² 1055
 Mourn me, ladies, with a hymn
 not of marriage but of jail,
 for wretched do I suffer wretchedly
 —alas alack, woe is me!—
 horrid sufferings too 1060
 at the hands of kin, and wrongly,
 tho I implored a man,
 igniting tearfullest Stygian groans
 —ai ai!—
 the man who first shaved me, 1065
 who put on me this dress
 and sent me on this errand
 to this sanctuary
 of the women!
 O force of destiny, 1070
 engendered by a god!
 O me accursed!
 Who would not behold my suffering,
 in its drastic evils, as unenviable?
 Ah, would that a fiery bolt from heaven above 1075
 would obliterate the barbarian!
 No more is it agreeable to look upon the sun's deathless flame,
 for I am hung up,
 damned by the gods to cut-throat grief,
 bound for a flashing trip to the grave! 1080

[Enter Echo.]

ECHO:¹⁶³

Greetings, dear girl; but may the gods obliterate
your father Kepheus for exposing you out there!

KINSMAN:

And who are you, who takest pity on my suffering?

ECHO:

Echo, a comedienne who sings back what she hears,
who just last year, in this very place, personally assisted Euripides in the 1085
contest. But now, child, you must play your part: to wail piteously!

KINSMAN: And you'll wail in response!

ECHO: I'll take care of that. But now, you start the script.

KINSMAN:

O holy night,
how long is thy chariot's course 1090
as thou drivest o'er the stellar back
of holy Aether¹⁶⁴
through Olympos most august!

ECHO:

Through Olympos!

KINSMAN:

Why o why has Andromeda had 1095
so much more than her share of ills?

ECHO:

Share of ills!

KINSMAN:

Unhappy in my death!

ECHO:

Unhappy in my death!

KINSMAN:

You're killing me, old bag, with your jabbering! 1100

ECHO:

Jabbering!

KINSMAN:

God, your interruptions are annoying—too much!

ECHO:

Too much!

KINSMAN:

Dear fellow, please let me finish my song, thank you very much!
Stop!

1105

ECHO:

Stop!

KINSMAN:

Go to hell!

ECHO:

Go to hell!

KINSMAN:

What's wrong with you?

ECHO:

What's wrong with you?

1110

KINSMAN:

You're babbling!

ECHO:

You're babbling!

KINSMAN:

Suffer!

ECHO:

Suffer!

KINSMAN:

Drop dead!

1115

ECHO:

Drop dead!

POLICEMAN [returning with a mat, which he places on a bench near the altar; to the
Kinsman]: Hey, you, what's all this talking?

ECHO: All this talking?

POLICEMAN: I'll call the Marshals!

1120

ECHO: I'll call the Marshals!

POLICEMAN: What's going on?

ECHO: What's going on?

POLICEMAN: Where's that noise coming from?

ECHO: Noise coming from! 1125

POLICEMAN [to the Kinsman]: Are you making all this racket?

ECHO: This racket?

POLICEMAN: You're gonna be sorry!

ECHO: Gonna be sorry!

POLICEMAN: You laughin' at me? 1130

ECHO: Laughin' at me?

KINSMAN: God no, it's this woman, over here!

ECHO: Over here!

POLICEMAN [looking around]: Where is the bitch?

ECHO: The bitch! 1135

KINSMAN: She's getting away!

POLICEMAN [running about]: Where ya goin'?

ECHO: Where ya goin'?

POLICEMAN: You won't get away with it!

ECHO: Get away with it! 1140

POLICEMAN: Still yappin'?

ECHO: Yappin?

POLICEMAN: Grab the bitch!

ECHO: Grab the bitch!

POLICEMAN: Yackety, confounded woman! 1145

[Euripides, still disguised as Perseus, reappears on the crane and flies about the stage.]

EURIPIDES:

Ye gods, to what barbaric land am I come
on sandal swift? For through the empyrean
cutting a swath I aim my wingèd foot
to Argos, and the cargo that I carry
is the Gorgon's head!¹⁶⁵

1150

POLICEMAN: Say what? You got the head of Gorgos, the secretary?¹⁶⁶

EURIPIDES:

'Tis the Gorgon's, I say once more.

POLICEMAN: George's, yeah, that's what I said.

EURIPIDES: [*alighting from the crane onto the stage*]:

Oho, what crag is this I see? What maiden

1155

fair as a goddess moored like a boat thereto?

KINSMAN:

O stranger, pity my misfortune cruel!

O free me from my bonds!

POLICEMAN: You, button your lip! You slimeball, you've got the nerve to blab
when you're about to be a *dead* maiden?

1160

EURIPIDES:

O maiden, 'tis with pity I see you hang there!

POLICEMAN: That's no maiden! That's a dirty old man, a crook and a creep!

EURIPIDES: Rubbish, you vulgarian! This is Kepheus' child, Andromeda.

POLICEMAN: [*pointing to the Kinsman's phallus*]: Lookit that figgie:¹⁶⁷ it don't
look little, do it now?

1165

EURIPIDES: Give me her hand, that I might clasp the lass! [*The Policeman steps
between them.*] Please, Skythian: all human flesh is weak. In my case, love for
this girl has seized me.

POLICEMAN: I don't envy you. But I tell you, if his asshole was turned around
this way I wouldn't say nothin' if you was to screw it.

1170

EURIPIDES: Why don't you let me untie her, officer, that I may couch her in the
nuptial bower?

POLICEMAN: If you're so hot to bugger the old guy, why don't you drill a hole
in the backside of that there plank and buttfuck him that way?

EURIPIDES: Gods no, I'd rather untie the chains. [*He approaches the Kinsman.*]

1175

POLICEMAN [*blocking his way*]: Try it—if you wanna get whipped.

EURIPIDES: I shall do it anyway!

POLICEMAN [*drawing his sword*]: I'd have to chop off yer head with this here
scimitar.

EURIPIDES [*aside*]:

Ah me, what action, what clever logic now? 1180
 All wit is lost upon this savage lout.
 For work a novel ruse upon a clod
 and thou hast worked in vain. No, I must find
 a different stratagem, one suitable for him.

[Exit Euripides.]

POLICEMAN [*to the Kinsman*]: Lousy fox, the monkey-tricks he tried to pull on 1185
 me!

KINSMAN [*calling after Euripides*]: Remember, Perseus, what a wretched state
 you're leaving me in!

POLICEMAN: So you're still hungry for a taste of the whip, are ya?

[The Policeman administers a few strokes with his whip, then stretches out on his mat and
 sleeps.]

CHORAL INTERLUDE

CHORUS:¹⁶⁸

Pallas Athena, the dancers' friend, 1190
 heed our customary invitation
 to the dance!
 Maiden girl unwedlocked,
 guardian of our country,
 sole manifest sovereign 1195
 who is called keeper of the keys!
 Show yourself, you
 who loathe tyrants,
 as is fitting.¹⁶⁹
 The country's female people 1200
 summon you: please come,
 bringing peace, comrade of festivity!
 Come, gracious happy sovereigns,¹⁷⁰
 to your own precinct,
 where torchlight reveals 1205
 your divine rites,
 an immortal sight
 forbidden to men!

O come, we pray,
 potent goddesses
 of the Thesmophoria!
 If ever before you answered our call,
 come now at our invitation,
 we beseech you, here to us!

1210

EPISODE

[Enter Euripides, undisguised and carrying a small harp and a travel-bag, with Elaphion, a dancing girl, and Teredon, a boy piper.]¹⁷¹

EURIPIDES [to the Chorus]: Ladies, if you want to make a permanent peace treaty with me, now's the time. I'll stipulate that in the future none of you women will ever again be slandered in any way by me. I'm making that my official offer.

CHORUS-LEADER: And what is your purpose in making this offer?

EURIPIDES: That one on the plank there is my kinsman. If I can take him away with me, you'll never hear another insult. But if you refuse, whatever you've been doing behind your husbands' backs while they're away at the front, I'll denounce to them when they return.

1220

CHORUS-LEADER: We're happy to honor our part in this deal. But you've got to make your own deal with this barbarian [indicating the Policeman].

1225

EURIPIDES: I'm ready for that job!¹⁷² [He takes an old woman's dress out of his travel-bag, puts it on and veils his face.] And your job, Elaphion, is to remember to do what I told you on the way over here. All right, the first thing is to walk back and forth swinging your haunches. [She does so.] And you, Teredon, accompany her on your pipes with a Persian dance-tune. [He does so, while Euripides plays his harp.]

1230

POLICEMAN [awakening and sitting up on his bench]: What's all the noise for? Some partiers waking me up.

EURIPIDES: The girl wants to rehearse, officer. She's on her way to dance for some gentlemen.

1235

POLICEMAN: Let her dance and rehearse; I won't stop her. She's pretty nimble: like a bug on a rug!

EURIPIDES: [to Elaphion]: All right, girl, take off your dress and sit on the cop's

lap. [She does so, with her back to the Policeman.] Now stick out your feet so I can take off your shoes.

1240

POLICEMAN: Yeah, sit down, sit down, yeah, yeah, sweetie! [He reaches around and feels her breasts.] Wow, what firm titties—like turnips!

EURIPIDES: Piper, play faster. [To Elaphion] Still afraid of the cop?

POLICEMAN: What a fine butt! [Looks down at his trousers.] You'll be sorry if you don't stay inside my pants! [opening his trousers to reveal a huge phallus] There! That's better for my prick!

1245

EURIPIDES [to Elaphion]: Well done. Grab your dress, it's time for us to be going.

POLICEMAN: Won't she give me a kiss first?

EURIPIDES: Sure. Kiss him. [She does so.]

1250

POLICEMAN: Woo woo woo! Boyoboy! What a sweet tongue, like Attic honey! Why don't you sleep with me?

EURIPIDES: Goodbye, officer. That's impossible.

POLICEMAN: No, wait, my dear old lady, please do me this favor.

EURIPIDES: Got a drachma, then?¹⁷³

1255

POLICEMAN: Sure I do.

EURIPIDES: Well, let's have it!

POLICEMAN: But I've got nothing on me! Wait, take my shaft-case. [He hands his quiver to Euripides.] And give it back after! [To Elaphion] You come with me! [To Euripides] And you watch the old man, grandma! What's your name?

1260

EURIPIDES: Artemisia.¹⁷⁴

POLICEMAN [as he exits with Elaphion]: Remember that name: Artamuxia.

EURIPIDES: Trickster Hermes, just keep on giving me this good luck! [To Teredon] You can run along now, kid; and take this stuff with you. [He hands him the harp, the women's clothing and the quiver.] And I'll release this one. [He begins to free the Kinsman.] As soon as you get loose you'd better get out of here fast and head back home to your wife and kids.

1265

KINSMAN: I'll do that, as soon as I'm loose.

EURIPIDES: There you are! It's up to you to escape before the policeman comes back and arrests you.

1270

KINSMAN [Putting on his dress]: That's just what I'm going to do!

[Euripides and the Kinsman exit on the run.]

POLICEMAN [returning with Elaphion, and wearing a limp phallus]: Old lady, your girl is nice and easygoing, no trouble at all! [Looking around] Where's the old lady? Oh no, now I'm in for it! Where'd the old man get to? Old lady! Lady! I don't like this at all, old lady! Artamuxia! The old bag's tricked me! [To Elaphion] 1275
You, run after her as quick as you can! [Elaphion runs off, the Policeman picks up his bow and realizes his quiver is gone.] Justly is it called a case for shafts: I traded mine for a fuck and got shafted! Oh my, what am I gonna do? Where'd that old lady get to? Artamuxia!

CHORUS-LEADER: Are you asking for the lady with the harp? 1280

POLICEMAN: Yeah, yeah! Seen her?

CHORUS-LEADER: She went that way [pointing left], and there was an old man with her.

POLICEMAN: Was the old man wearing a yellow dress?

CHORUS-LEADER: That's right. You might still catch them if you go that way 1285
[pointing right].

POLICEMAN: The dirty old bag! Which way should I go again? [He runs off to the right.]

CHORUS-LEADER: Right! Straight up that hill! Where are you going? No, run the other way! No, you're going the wrong way! 1290

POLICEMAN [winded]: Damn! I've gotta run! Artamuxia! [Exit.]

CHORUS-LEADER: Run off now quick as you can—straight to hell!

CHORUS:

Well, we've had our share of fun.

Now it's time for every woman

to go on home. 1295

May the Twain Gods of Thesmophoria
well reward each and every one of you
for your performance!

24. Aether was a substance thought to lie between the air earthly beings breathe and the dome of the sky. Although Aether could be considered divine, it was not worshipped as a god: here Euripides speaks as an adept in the scientific or intellectualist theories currently in vogue among sophistic thinkers.
25. Agathon, who had won the first prize in his first competition five years earlier, was the most innovative tragic poet of the younger generation, incorporating the “new music” (n. 29, below), writing choruses unconnected with the action, and even inventing fictional plots. He was also very handsome, and in Plato’s dialogues *Protagoras* and *Symposium* is represented as having maintained an erotic relationship with an older man, Pausanias, long into adulthood, and as championing homosexual relationships.
26. Paleness in men, suggesting the indoor life of women, was a sign of effeminacy.
27. Since most Athenian men wore beards, to be clean-shaven could be considered effeminate.
28. Implying that Agathon, like a (male or female) prostitute, has submitted sexually to every man in Athens; the Kinsman “might not know it” because he might have seen Agathon only from behind.
29. In the following songs, and throughout the Agathon-scene, Aristophanes parodies the “new music” of the later fifth century (see West 1992:356–66), with its novel instrumentation, complex rhythmic modulations and florid poeticism.
30. The Kinsman’s expressions of hostility toward Agathon and his slave characterize him as holding conventionally macho views about what is appropriate for each gender in terms of manner, appearance and behavior. For normative distinctions between the manly hoplite (active) and the effeminate *kinaidos* (passive) see Winkler 1990:46–54.
31. The Kinsman brandishes his stage-phallos. His threat of anal rape reveals his own arousal at the sight of effeminate males, which in Greek terms is a conventionally masculine reaction.
32. In this year the Thesmophoria, which normally fell in October, had in fact fallen in November, after the start of the winter season.
33. The solemn day called Nesteia (“Fast”), when, in preparation for the rites of the joyful and climactic third day, the celebrants abstained from food and reverted (as one ancient

- source puts it) to “the ancient way of life.” For the Thesmophoria generally, see Introduction 2.
34. That is, Demeter and Kore, the goddesses in whose honor the festival is held.
 35. For the Thesmophoria women formed their own cultic organization under the leadership of their own elected leaders (*archousai*, the feminine equivalent of the polis’s male *archontes*); here Aristophanes imagines the women turning their cult-gathering into a special political assembly, meeting as the men do on the Pnyx: see *Women at the Thesmophoria*, Introduction.
 36. For Euripides’ reputation as a misogynist see *Lysistrata*, n. 76.
 37. Referring to the convoluted melodies characteristic of the “new music” (n. 29, above).
 38. The following “chorus” imagines the maidens of Troy celebrating after the Greeks had lifted their siege, leaving behind the Trojan Horse. Its rhythm is largely Ionic, suggesting Asiatic luxury and effeminacy.
 39. Demeter and Kore.
 40. The Muses, nine maiden daughters of Zeus, embodied and were thought to inspire poetry.
 41. That is, the god Apollo, who with Poseidon built the walls of Troy; the Simois was a river in the Trojan plain.
 42. Artemis was Apollo’s maiden sister.
 43. See *Lysistrata*, n. 23.
 44. The Kinsman attributes to Agathon’s song (exemplifying “artsy” contemporary tragedy) the power to make men want to be sodomized, but his macho sarcasm shows that he himself is immune.
 45. These lost plays by Aischylos (who is often portrayed by Aristophanes as the favorite playwright of older, more traditional Athenians) dramatized the confrontation between the hyper-masculine King Lykourgos and the sexually ambivalent god Dionysos; Euripides’ extant play *Bakchai* was later to explore much the same kind of confrontation. In both cases the god humiliates and destroys his opponent: in *Bakchai* Dionysos persuades King Pentheus to dress as a woman and infiltrate the women’s rites, where he is exposed and ripped to pieces. In addition, the Kinsman’s allusion reminds the spectators of Agathon’s resemblance to the theatrical image of Dionysos.
 46. The second wife of the Attic hero, Theseus, who, when her stepson Hippolytos rejected her advances, committed suicide after writing a note that accused Hippolytos of attempted rape and so led to his death. Euripides’ dramatization of this story in *Hippolytos* of 431 had alarmed the more straitlaced Athenians, since it depicted Phaidra propositioning Hippolytos. Despite a second (our extant) version of the play produced in 428, which omitted the propositioning-scene and treated Phaidra more sympathetically, she became a byword for the wanton wife; shameless enjoyment of sex is here epitomized by reference to the “equestrian position” (possibly recalling Euripides’ play, lines 228–31, where Phaidra imagines herself riding with Hippolytos). For a discussion of her treatment in our play see Cowan 2008.
 47. Dionysiac creatures, half man and half beast, who symbolized sexuality unrestrained by the norms of civilization.
 48. All these were lyric poets of the previous century, known for their love songs.

49. A tragic poet of the Aeschylean period, noted for the sweetness of his poetry.
50. From *Alkestis* (produced in 438), where Pheres rejects his son's request to die in his place.
51. Male intrusion on the rites of Thesmophoria was a very serious crime, and legends told of the mutilation and/or murder of intruders at the hands of the women.
52. That is, Aphrodite = "sexual enjoyment"; Agathon fears that he would make a more attractive woman than the women themselves, and so provoke their hatred.
53. Euripides, the tragic director, must now "direct" a comic actor in a comic plot.
54. The Eumenides ("Kindly Ones"), who defended justice (especially when crimes against kin were at issue) and gave sanctuary; their definitive dramatization was in Aischylos' *Eumenides*.
55. For this man see *Lysistrata*, n. 134, and below, where he appears as a character.
56. The removal of body hair (by singeing or plucking) was an essential feature of female grooming; see *Lysistrata*, n. 45.
57. Perhaps with a secondary allusion to the metaphorical sense of pig = woman.
58. A woman's oath.
59. Unlike Agathon, the Kinsman feels degraded by adopting a feminine appearance, and he does not succeed in losing his true male identity, though for a while he hides it under female clothing.
60. A man's oath.
61. A "scientific" entity (n. 24, above) and so useless in an oath.
62. Paraphrasing a notorious line from Euripides' *Hippolytos* (see n. 46, above), "It was my tongue that swore, but my heart remains unsworn," spoken by Hippolytos of the oath of silence Phaidra had made him swear before he knew what her secret was. Taken out of context, the line was criticized as encouraging dishonesty.
63. For the first time in the play we see male actors playing women who are supposed to be real women.
64. The Kinsman's monologue is in effect the prologue-speech of the "play" being staged by Euripides, whose starring role the Kinsman has reluctantly agreed to play.
65. Demeter and her daughter Pherephatta, elsewhere called Persephone, or Kore ("Maiden"), were the principal deities of the Thesmophoria.
66. Literally "piglet," an animal sacred to Demeter but also Greek slang for vulva.
67. The Kinsman satirizes the sort of prayer for the success of one's children that would be characteristic of actual matrons.
68. Now the Kinsman plays the role of spectator, but as a spy at a meeting he is not entitled to attend. In this he resembles the play's male spectators.
69. Torches played a prominent part in actual rites for Demeter and Kore.
70. This invocation and the other procedures to follow parody those of male political assemblies. The disguised Kinsman has gained entrance to a "polis" of women forbidden to men, much as disguised women gain forbidden entrance to the men's assembly in *Assemblywomen*. It is possible that the old priestess Kritylla (who gives her father's name, Antitheos, and deme in 898) somehow represented an actual person active (as a priestess?) in this period: a member of the chorus of old women in *Lysistrata*.

is also named Kritylla (323), and one Antitheos is listed on an inscribed table (*Inscriptiones Graecae* ii² 2343) along with fifteen other men, one of whom, Philonides, was a producer of some of Aristophanes' plays and another, Simon (from Aristophanes' own deme), is mentioned in *Knights*.

71. Kritylla invokes deities appropriate to the Thesmophoria rather than to a political assembly.
72. This last category is, of course, a comic invention.
73. Apollo.
74. Athena.
75. In a contest with Poseidon over the possession of Attika, Athena prevailed by her gift of the olive tree (Herodotos 8.55).
76. Artemis.
77. The parody begins by echoing fairly closely the curses uttered at political assemblies against enemies of the polis. But the list of female "enemies of women" comically confirms male stereotypes of the secret misbehavior of wives—or, put another way, the accuracy of Euripides' "misogynistic" portrayals (and Aristophanes' too, of course).
78. That is, the Persian Empire, the traditional barbarian enemy of the Greeks; Kritylla inserts Euripides into the familiar curse.
79. A wife who failed in her principal duty—to produce a male heir for her husband—might be tempted to try such a trick. Such babies were purchased from slave-women whose masters refused to pay for the babies' rearing.
80. Apparently the women on stage are young wives; older women looking for lovers (a comic stereotype exploited in *Assemblywomen* and *Wealth*) would be widows, who had greater control over their money and their movements; see Henderson 1987b:117–19.
81. Alluding to the stereotype that women are overfond of alcohol.
82. When applied to the current political situation (see *Lysistrata*, Introduction) these provisions have a serious ring, even though when applied to the wives' enemies (particularly their husbands) they are comic.
83. The name Sostrate is not uncommon but Archikleia (the reading in a papyrus) occurs only here and in an inscription listing donors to the sanctuary at Brauron (for which see *Lysistrata* n. 142): was she perhaps (like Kritylla: n. 70, above) an actual person? The manuscript reads Timokleia, a more common name; how they came to be variants is obscure.
84. Because this was a day of fasting and relative inactivity (see above, n. 33). In addition, Aristophanes perhaps did not want to imply that his comic assembly bore any resemblance to the actual rituals of the Thesmophoria.
85. The following debate is conducted like an assembly-meeting, no mention being made of the Thesmophoria.
86. Note that women's attendance at the dramatic festivals is taken for granted.
87. For some reason Aristophanes habitually refers to Euripides' mother as a seller of wild herbs—a disreputable social category, implying both poverty and public visibility (see Henderson 1987b:121–26)—even though in reality she was well-born (though the jibe could conceivably refer to a younger woman, a stepmother otherwise unknown).

88. As we have begun to suspect, the women are angry at Euripides not for lying about them but for revealing the truth!
89. Alluding to Euripides' play *Stheneboia*, whose adulterous heroine constantly pines for her husband's young "Korinthian guest" Bellerophon.
90. The (Euripidean) source is unknown.
91. From Euripides' play *Phoinix*.
92. This last item is the most significant one.
93. To duplicate the husband's seal on the door.
94. The tragic poet earlier referred to as "base."
95. Just as purists today might charge an artist with "commercialism" or "selling out," so Aristophanes frequently charged Euripides with lowering the tragic art to suit mass tastes.
96. Euripides' plays often reflect ideas of contemporary intellectuals (Sokrates, for example) that could strike conventional people as immoral or sacrilegious.
97. See above, n. 87.
98. The Kinsman's speech, like Dikaiopolis' in *Acharnians* (497–566), is modelled on the one made by the hero of Euripides' lost play *Telephos*, produced in 438 (for fragments of this play and discussion see Collard et al. 1995:17–52, Collard and Cropp 2008–9). Telephos was the Greek king of barbarian Mysia, whose land was mistakenly attacked by the Greeks on their way to Troy. During the attack Telephos was wounded by Achilles, who alone could cure the wound. Telephos disguised himself as a beggar in order to enter Agamemnon's palace and plead his own (and the Trojans') case. When his disguise was exposed and he was threatened with death, he seized the baby Orestes, Agamemnon's son, and took refuge at an altar: this scene is also parodied in *Acharnians* (325–51) and later in our play.
99. As medicine for his wife's indigestion.
100. That is, the pillar and statue of Apollo Agyieus in the street before the house (and also part of the permanent decor of the theatrical stage-house: thus the Kinsman might illustrate his account before our eyes); this wife's act was both shameless and sacrilegious (intercourse at any shrine was forbidden).
101. See above, n. 46.
102. See above, n. 79.
103. Greek women did not allow husbands to be in the room when a baby was born.
104. We are apparently to imagine that the old woman had been the father's nanny. For the criteria applied by Athenians to penile beauty (small and with shapely foreskin, as here) and ugliness (large and circumcized) see Dover 1978:125–32.
105. That is, the Kinsman, like a politician, only pretends to work for the public good, while secretly working against it.
106. A quote from Euripides' play *Melanippe in Chains*.
107. Comic characters often say of themselves, or accept from others, what would shame or anger a real-life counterpart; here, where the theme is gender-disguise and deception, the male actor may momentarily drop his role to make an aside.
108. Aglauros and Pandrosos, daughters of the mythical Attic king, Kekrops, had

sanctuaries on the Akropolis whose cults, celebrated by girls and women, were among the polis's most ancient and important; see Simon 1983:43–46.

109. As in a male assembly.
110. Why the maiden Melanippe is singled out as a “bad” woman is unclear: the subject of two plays by Euripides, she was seduced (or perhaps raped) by Poseidon and bore twin sons, then was accused by her father of unchastity; for fragments and discussion see Collard et al. 1995:240–80, Collard and Cropp 2008.
111. See above, n. 46.
112. Odysseus’ virtuous wife in Homer’s *Odyssey*. Note, however, that the two recent Euripidean plays that are parodied in the second half of our play—*Helen* and *Andromeda*—do feature virtuous heroines, a new direction Euripides apparently took after the failure of his Trojan trilogy in 415.
113. The Apatouria was a kinship festival for men and boys from which women were excluded.
114. For Kleisthenes see *Lysistrata*, n. 134. Of this scene Taafe 1993:92 remarks that Kleisthenes, as a male whose gender identity is female, “speaks for women and . . . takes their place in a different sort of theater, in the ecclesia.”
115. Literally “I am your *proxenos*” (a foreign citizen recognized by a polis and empowered to represent the interests of fellow countrymen before it). This relationship explains why the women do not resent Kleisthenes’ intrusion on their meeting.
116. Kleonymos was an obese politician frequently ridiculed in comedy for cowardice, because he is said to have dropped his shield in battle, probably in the general Athenian retreat at Delion in 424. It is unclear why Mika is supposed to be his wife; perhaps (as Sommerstein 1994:194 suggests) she is obese too.
117. A real deme, chosen perhaps because the first syllable suggests a word meaning “penis.”
118. The Kinsman makes two safe guesses, since (according to stereotype) women will take any opportunity to drink wine, their access to it being normally restricted.
119. The *hamis* (urinal), used at male drinking parties, was a jug with a narrow opening at the top and thus unusable by women.
120. The hill on which Athenian assemblies were held; for the women’s Thesmophorian assembly see *Women at the Thesmophoria*, Introduction.
121. For the parody see n. 98.
122. The feminine equivalent of the masculine name Manes, frequently given to Asiatic slaves at Athens.
123. This scene is portrayed on a mid-fourth century Apulian bell-krater in the Martin von Wagner Museum at the University of Würzburg (H5697); it is the frontispiece of Sommerstein 1994.
124. Referring to the spring festival of Anthesteria, which honored Dionysos and where, in addition to adult wine-drinking, small children were garlanded and given small jugs and toys as presents.
125. See n. 46, above.
126. Priestly personnel at a sacrifice normally received some portion of the victim.

127. Aristophanes makes Kritylla the Kinman's new guard because older women were stereotypically tougher than younger women and because she suits the later parody of Euripides' *Helen*.
128. In Euripides' lost play *Palamedes* (produced, like the extant *Trojan Women*, in 415) the hero, the inventor of writing and a Greek fighting against Troy, was framed for treason and executed; his brother Oïax got a message through to their father by writing it on oar-blades and floating them back to Greece. For details see Collard and Cropp 2008–9.
129. For this Old Comic structure (the self-revelation of the chorus and its leader, who "step aside" from the plot) see in general Dover 1972:49–53 and Hubbard 1991, who (pp. 182–99) finds in this parabasis a resumption of some of the themes and concerns addressed in *Lysistrata*.
130. As in Aristophanes' *Birds* (produced in 414), this chorus speaks on its own, rather than the poet's, behalf.
131. For the workings of this criterion of female modesty see Cohen 1991:133–70.
132. That is, at an all-night women's festival, a wedding or a betrothal.
133. Charminos was an Athenian naval commander defeated the previous year, whereas the woman's name Nausimache—a typical name, like the other women's names to follow except for Salabakcho—means "victory at sea."
134. Kleophon was a politician, Salabakcho a courtesan: as often, Aristophanes insinuates that successful politicians gained their success by submitting to sexual penetration by influential men.
135. The names mean "Excellence in Battle" and "Military Victory," here understood as feminine personifications of the Athenian triumph over the Persians at Marathon in 490. The Athenians, the premier naval power in Greece, had not won a major land battle in the past 46 years, and are chided here for not daring to dislodge the Spartan army that had invested their territory two years earlier.
136. The name means "Good Counsel."
137. With sex, presumably.
138. The idea that women manage their households more prudently than men manage the public treasury—a biting charge in a time of fiscal distress caused by failure in the war—is a central theme in *Lysistrata*.
139. A surprise for "shields." The women accuse the men not only of fiscal recklessness and dishonesty but also of cowardice in battle, referring to the current Athenian situation in the war.
140. These two festivals, like the Thesmophoria, honored Demeter and were celebrated only by women; they also seem to have been run by a women's "government." See in general Brumfield 1981:156–81, Simon 1983:19–24, Burkert 1985:230. The Chorus-Leader's complaint here implies that women's seating at their own festivals was normally determined by (the status of?) their husbands.
141. Hyperbolos was a popular politician who had been ostracized (voted into exile by the Assembly) c. 417 and was to be assassinated shortly after the production of this play. He had been the frequent object of comic ridicule and attack during his political heyday in the 420s, along with his mother, who had been caricatured in at least one play as an alien, a whore and a drunk. She would now have been in her fifties.

142. This Athenian commander, ridiculed in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* in 425, had died a hero's death in the Sicilian expedition; his mother would now be in her seventies.
143. Although women could not make a legally binding contract for more than a small amount of money, they could lend any amount of money if the loan was underwritten by a man; but any public business activity by a citizen woman, let alone money-lending, could be considered disreputable (Henderson 1987b: 121–26). In this case, Hyperbolos' mother may merely have been seeing to her son's business interests during his exile.
144. In Euripides' (extant) play, produced a year earlier, in 412, the Helen whose abduction to Troy "launched a thousand ships" turns out to have been a phantom, while the real Helen spent the war in Egypt as a prisoner in the palace of Proteus, who has decreed that she marry his son Theoklymenos. After the war, her estranged husband Menelaos goes there, discovers the truth and (with the help of an Egyptian prophetess Theonoe) escapes with Helen. This play, with its novel and romantic plot, its emphasis on exotic adventure and its happy ending, marked a new departure for Euripides after 415, perhaps (as the Kinsman seems to suggest) to change his luck in the tragic competition.
145. In the following scene, the Kinsman and Euripides speak exclusively in tragic style (except for a few comic touches), with about half the lines being quoted or adapted from *Helen* and the rest composed by Aristophanes in paratragic style. Meanwhile Kritylla, being ignorant of myth and tragic theater, cannot enter into, and thus be deceived by, the "tragic" performance being staged for her.
146. A proverbial villain.
147. An Athenian commander.
148. See n. 70, above.
149. For the original *es cheras* (into my arms) Aristophanes has substituted *escharas* ("brazier," a slang word for vulva).
150. Who were, according to the Greeks, dishonest people. Ironically, Kritylla will have reminded the audience of the old Egyptian prophetess, Theonoe, who in Euripides' play had helped Menelaos and Helen escape.
151. A length of planking on which criminals were executed by suspension, as on the cross.
152. In reality, no citizen could be summarily punished without a hearing.
153. Pauson is elsewhere mocked for being poor; for the fasting see above, n. 33.
154. For the chorus's avoidance of mockery of individual spectators, which typically occurs in the second half of a comedy, see also *Lysistrata*, n. 188.
155. Apollo.
156. This epithet usually refers to Apollo, but here seems to refer to his sister Artemis; both use the bow.
157. That is, in the dramatic competition, and also perhaps in the war.
158. Since these are gods associated with the countryside, the chorus may be acknowledging the Athenians' hope for an end to the Spartan occupation.
159. This Policeman, like those who accompany the Magistrate in *Lysistrata*, is a Skythian archer and public slave, and so speaks broken Greek.

160. In Euripides' lost play *Andromeda*, produced together with *Helen* in 412, the flying hero Perseus, equipped by Hermes with winged cap and sandals (for the costume see Stone 1981:325–27), rescues the maiden Andromeda, whose father Kepheus, the king of Ethiopia, had chained her to a rock to be eaten by a sea-monster, hoping thus to appease the angry sea-god Poseidon. As the play opens, the desolate Andromeda speaks with the echo of her own voice from the caves on the shore, then is joined by a chorus of sympathetic maidens; Aristophanes reverses these scenes in his parody. The songs closely imitate Euripides' arioso style, while both songs and dialogue are a pastiche of tragic quotations and comic bathos.
161. The maiden Andromeda had enjoyed dancing, while the Kinsman (as was stereotypical of Athenian old men) had enjoyed jury service.
162. An Athenian elsewhere mocked for his passion for gourmet seafood.
163. The nymph Echo had foiled Hera's attempt to punish other nymphs with whom Zeus had been having affairs; in revenge Hera made her able to say only what she had just heard. In Euripides' play Echo lived in the cave where Andromeda was chained. In this parody Aristophanes spoofs Euripides' use of an invisible character.
164. See n. 24, above.
165. Before spotting Andromeda Perseus had beheaded Medousa, one of three sister Gorgons, whose gaze turned anyone who saw it to stone; he kept Medousa's head in a leather bag and used it to petrify his own enemies before finally turning it over to Athena.
166. Confusing the mythological character with an otherwise unknown public official (not the famous orator Gorgias of Leontinoi). The Policeman is no more knowledgeable or sympathetic a spectator than Kritylla was.
167. "Fig" (*sukon*) was a common Attic slang term for the female genitals, "fig-tree" (*suke*) for the male; the Policeman uses the former sarcastically.
168. This hymn to the city's most august deities—Athena, Demeter and Persephone—has, in spite of its farcical dramatic environment, an earnest and patriotic tone.
169. By contrast with the jocular references to tyranny in *Lysistrata* a few months earlier, this is a more earnest-sounding reference to the current climate of political and military instability at Athens, which a few months later did indeed succumb to a right-wing coup d'état and changes in the democratic constitution.
170. Demeter and Persephone.
171. Elaphion's name means "Fawn" and Teredon's "Woodworm." Like all "naked women" in Old Comedy (a frequent feature of final scenes), Elaphion is played by a male actor wearing a leotard to which false breasts and genitalia were attached.
172. Euripides finally transforms himself into a woman (as had Agathon), but into a comic rather than tragic one, and his winning stratagem turns out to be the staging not of a tragic, but of a typical comic, scene.
173. A very high price (see Halperin 1990:107–12): probably Euripides is counting on the slave-policeman not having so much money, so that he will offer his quiver as surety (and thus facilitate their escape).
174. See *Lysistrata*, n. 149.